



**Finance Committee Testimony  
By Stan Sorkin, President  
Connecticut Food Association  
March 9, 2015**

**Testimony in Support of SB No. 946: An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget**

Good afternoon, Chairman Fonfara, Chairman Berger, and Members of the Finance Committee. My name is Stan Sorkin, President of the Connecticut Food Association. I am here today to testify on behalf of the members of the Connecticut Food Association in support of SB 946.

The Connecticut Food Association is the state trade association that conducts programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations on behalf of its 240 member companies—food retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and service providers in the state of Connecticut. CFA's members in Connecticut operate approximately 300 retail food stores and 250 pharmacies. Their combined estimated annual sales volume of \$5.7 billion represents 75% of all retail food store sales in Connecticut. CFA's retail membership is composed of multi-store chains, regional firms, and single store independent supermarkets employing over 30,000 associates. The majority of CFA members are family-owned supermarkets. Our goal is to create a growth oriented economic climate that makes Connecticut competitive with surrounding states.

It's time to put Connecticut consumers first by continuing to modernize our state's antiquated alcohol laws. Designed for a bygone era, these outdated laws simply do not make sense anymore. They are inconvenient, limit consumers' choices, raise prices, and cost our state millions of dollars in lost sales to neighboring states- New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

The projected revenue of \$6.6 million will help offset the budget deficit.

The supermarket industry believes in the free market system and that consumers will benefit if there is open competition. Common sense reforms such as optional expanded hours of operation and the elimination of minimum pricing will increase competition. For Connecticut consumers they will mean more convenience, more choices, and lower prices. The expanded hours of operation will put Connecticut's hours of operation more in line with surrounding states.

Moreover, we believe that additional revenue will be generated if Sunday's opening time would be the same as every other day of the week- 8 a.m. An 8 a.m. opening would allow stores to capture business of consumers on their way to the beach or lakes, especially those stores on the NY border which has an early opening time.

Minimum pricing sets an artificial floor for the price of wine and spirits. This prohibits price competition and drives up costs for consumers. Connecticut consumers deserve more competition and lower prices, not artificial price controls. The elimination of artificially high retail prices would put more disposable income in the hands of consumers which can be further used to expand CT's economy. That's why minimum pricing laws should be repealed.

433 South Main Street, Suite 309, West Hartford, CT 06110

email: [ctfood@ctfoodassociation.org](mailto:ctfood@ctfoodassociation.org) · [www.ctfoodassociation.org](http://www.ctfoodassociation.org) · Phone (860) 216-4055 · Fax (860) 216-4098

Also, as a suggestion, to further enhance the state's revenue, we are recommending that this committee looks at allowing the holders of a grocery beer permit to sell hard cider, a category of beverages that mirrors the characteristics of beer. We sell cider, why not hard cider? In 2011, our beer permit fee was

raised to \$1500 from \$170 per year. Isn't it time to add a product category to help offset that huge cost, especially when compared to a package store's \$595 permit fee which allows them to sell beer, wine, and spirits.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on the claims that passage of HB5021 in 2011 would put 900 package stores out of business. Check the records. This in fact did not happen. The answer is there were 1227 active package store permits in the state in 2012; and there are 1226 today---for all intents: unchanged. I suggest you be leery of current doomsday store closing projections.

It's time for the General Assembly to act on behalf of Connecticut's consumers by ending our outdated alcohol laws and continue to bring our state's alcohol regulations into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.